

BOOK REVIEWS

Serology with Lipid Antigen. By R. L. Kahn. 1950. Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London. Pp. 328 + xii. 46s. 6d.

In this book Dr. Kahn has incorporated the most important results of his researches of the last 25 years concerning the Kahn test for syphilis. For many, this in itself will perform a useful function and justify the publication of this work.

The book is divided into four sections. Part I describes the Universal Serological Reaction with lipid antigens. This theory is stimulating and sufficient evidence is produced by Dr. Kahn to warrant further investigation by other serologists. It is possible that some help may be received from this work for the interpretation of positive Kahn reactions obtained with the sera of non-syphilitic patients.

Part II deals with the serology of syphilis with Kahn procedures. It is encouraging to read that the lowering of the sensitivity level of present-day serological tests for syphilis may possibly be a step in the right direction (p. 140). The description of the Standard Kahn Reaction using cardiolipin antigens is not clear, and one is left with the impression that the formula of the antigen adopted for use was not determined by best available methods. Furthermore, it is not indicated whether it is better to use standard Kahn antigen or the newer cardiolipin antigens in the test.

In Chapters 12 and 13 the terms "false-positive" and "false-negative" reaction are perpetuated. This is regrettable; it is time that V.D. serologists got together and agreed upon a more scientific terminology.

The technique of Kahn procedures is described in Part III. This contains so little new material that it is difficult to know why it has been included; moreover, three questions might well be asked:

(1) Is it not time that the practice of reporting the strength of positive serum reactions by a series of plus signs was dropped?

(2) Should not the term "doubtful positive" be relegated to the past?

(3) Should not the "dropping" technique of performing the Kahn test be included in this section? Its

advantages in speed, accuracy, and saving of labour are well established and one wonders why Dr. Kahn ignores its merits.

Part IV, which is concerned with the practical aspects of the Kahn Universal Reaction, is useful in itself as a recapitulation of Part I, but it is surprising that Dr. Kahn does not report on any work he may have done with the sera of patients who were pregnant or suffering from virus pneumonia infections. No doubt he will repair this omission in his next book "The Universal Serological Reaction in Health and Disease" which is to be published shortly.

To sum up, the contents of this book seem to have been put together hurriedly; one is left in some doubt whether it was written for the expert or the novice in V.D. serology. The style of writing varies considerably and the reader might well have been spared such words as "centrifugated" (p. 234). Clinicians and serologists are recommended to read Parts I and IV, but whether the reader will derive any benefit from Parts II and III depends entirely upon his experience. I. N. O. P.

Prostitution and the Law. By T. E. James. 1951. Heinemann Medical Books, London. Pp. 160 + ix. 21s.

This book is an admirable survey of the history of prostitution and of the laws and administration of the laws in England, the U.S.A., France, and the U.S.S.R. The interactions between law and culture and between law and public opinion are given the degree of emphasis demanded in a study of a problem so full of emotional, sociological, and economic complications.

A list of references follows each chapter, and the book has three appendices, of which B gives the texts of the relevant English Statutes, while A and C afford rather meagre information about the relevant laws in Europe and America.

The author is opposed to the principle of using legal enactments and police administration to make war on prostitutes, while strongly approving any measures for making war on prostitution; he agrees with the views of other authorities including Flexner